



Seattle Design Commission

August 17, 2005

Mayor Greg Nickels
Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98114

Gregory J. Nickels
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David Spiker
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Honorable Mayor Greg Nickels:

Seldom do cities have the opportunity that Seattle now has to champion and reconceive its waterfront. The Seattle Design Commission has taken an active role in the evolving Central Waterfront Plan and related design process that has captured the imaginations of so many citizens, politicians, and designers. We do, however, have serious concern around the recent planning and design efforts begun by different agencies and interest groups. No fewer than six agencies are currently working on designs for some portion of the waterfront. These well meaning but independent processes pose a challenge to the cohesive and holistic vision of Seattle's waterfront that the City so deserves.

Two specific examples include the work underway for a new ferry terminal at Colman Dock and the Feasibility Study for Pier 62/63. Although we applaud the breadth of research and concern given by those involved in both projects, we hope that the results will enrich and not detract from the comprehensive planning effort that the waterfront needs. The Commission's view is that detailed designs or design alternatives, in attempting to prepare for a future waterfront, are simply much too early to be useful. We urge the City and its partner agencies to make the minimum expenditures necessary at this early stage to maintain maximum flexibility for subsequent development.

The Commission reaffirms its longstanding position that the City take a leadership role in the planning process of the entire waterfront. Funds would be better spent in careful and comprehensive planning, than on a series of waterfront improvements and changes, each involving separate agencies and distinct consultants. A splintered approach will undermine the incredible possibilities that have only just begun to unfold in rethinking the next one hundred years of Seattle's waterfront.

A comprehensive plan for the waterfront should be developed and coordinated by a single agency. Here DPD is the logical choice, it being the agency charged with both long term and sub-area planning. The City's Waterfront Plan requires adequate funding, needs the authority to be implemented and should be conceived as flexible, inclusive, and visionary.

The Design Commission eagerly supports the City's efforts to realize every possible opportunity that our waterfront offers.

Sincerely,

David Spiker
Chair

cc: Seattle City Council
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